

## **AFTER THE WAR IN GEORGIA: LESS COOPERATION AND MORE CONFRONTATION?**

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Note: WSN Global Editor [Dieter Farwick](#) conducted online interviews with some renowned members of the WSN International Advisory Board and presents their views.

In the aftermath of the war in which Russian troops in August occupied parts of Georgia, gained control of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, then recognized both as independent states and left troops in both provinces and in mainland Georgia, there is an urgent need for a solid assessment of the geopolitical and geo-strategic situation.



*"The conflict in and around Georgia has  
changed the political landscape"*

What is most likely: Future cooperation or confrontation between Russia and the West? What should NATO and the EU do regarding their relations with Russia and further NATO enlargement including Ukraine and Georgia? What are the main lessons that have been learned?

WSN Global Editor [Dieter Farwick](#) conducted online interviews with some renowned members of the WSN International Advisory Board and presents their views.

The questions are:

- How would you summarize what happened ?
- What are the main lessons learned?
- What should NATO do?
- What should the EU do?

Here are the board members participating:

[Ehsan Ahari](#) (USA), [Klaus Becher](#) (Austria), BrigGen (ret) [Luigi Caligaris](#) (Italy), LtGen (ret) [Götz Gliemeroth](#) (Germany), [Jackson Janes](#) (USA), Gen (ret) [Klaus Naumann](#) (Germany), BrigGen (ret) [Aslam Khan Niazi](#) (Pakistan), [John Nomikos](#) (Greece), MajGen (ret) [Wolfgang Plasche](#) (Austria), MajGen (ret) [Peter Regli](#) (Switzerland), MajGen [Sir Sebastian Roberts](#) (UK), Gen (ret) [Rainer Schuwirth](#) (Germany)

## How would you summarize what happened ?

**Ehsan Ahrari:** Yes, indeed, the conflict in and around Georgia has changed the political landscape - more symbolically than in terms of physical occupation of GA. Under the best case scenario, if Russia were to pull out of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the return of these territories to GA will cause a lot of bloodletting and a lot of Ossetians and Abkhazians will die. Under the worse case scenario, if Russia were to stay put, the conflict—and attendant bloodletting—will only be postponed.



[Ehsan Ahrari](#)

Saakashvili misread the US overtures toward his country for membership in NATO. He gambled by sending his rag-tag troops to South Ossetia, hoping that Russia will get out and he will tell the world that he has stood up against the Russian bear and won. Saakashvili has demonstrated a high degree of irresponsibility and, indeed, madness, by initiating a military conflict.

Russia, to be sure, is not a good guy in this episode. It was looking for an opportunity to show to the U.S. that it can no longer take Russia's security interests for granted. And Saakashvil fell into that trap.

Outcome: Now the world is faced with a crisis that has a potential of boiling over into a major war. The old style Cold War is not back, but its new version is, especially at a time when the U.S. is getting ready to elect a new president, at a time when the U.S. forces are facing what Paul Kennedy described as "overstretch," and at a time the EU is demonstrating that it has indeed become a paper tiger.

**Klaus Becher:** President Saakashvili had long openly promised the reintegration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia under effective Georgian rule. While in conformity with international law, this goal was always a source of concern in terms of peace and stability in the region not just for Russia but also for the US and Europe. After the German-led rejection of Georgian membership in NATO and, by implication, the loss of the perspective of eventual EU membership, President Saakashvili felt inclined to drop his previously rather successful policy of luring Ossetians back through attractive economic offerings. Misguided by a wrong assessment of US interests in the Caucasus, he apparently regarded the last months of the Bush administration as a last window of opportunity for engaging the US in a military confrontation with Russia to conquer South Ossetia by force. In spite of obvious Russian military preparedness for Georgia's decision to launch a large offensive, the Georgian leadership triggered an unequal war and suffered decisive defeat. Unsurprisingly, the politically strengthened Russian leadership used this easy opportunity to demonstrate Russia's regained power to act as regional arbiter, able to shape developments around its own borders. Russia's long-delayed decision to recognise the sovereignty of the two ex-Georgian breakaway republics creates new facts that are hard to swallow but ironically may make it easier to build a lasting peace order for the region over time.

**Luigi Caligaris:** After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the United States failed to understand that Russia neither won nor was it defeated and, sooner or later, would claim back its role as a world power both willing and ready to act. Moreover, the present Russian leadership is well aware that national pride is a very effective means of keeping a country together and is therefore ready to use it.

While Russia has been trying to cure its wounded pride, NATO has adopted an enlargement policy that it cannot afford, both politically and militarily. Machiavelli once said: “Beware of those who promise to defend you when they are not capable of defending themselves.” Europe has ignored his advice while new NATO countries opted for US protection.

**Götz Gliemerth:** For some time, a Russian strategy has emerged that aims at winning back power over former Soviet republics. After several years of fanning intra-Georgian conflicts over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia has used the rushed, mistaken attack by Georgian forces against South Ossetian militias as an excuse for its long-planned, massive military strike against Georgia in pursuit of this strategy. The fighting led to major losses among the civilian population. The initial large-scale occupation of Georgian core territory was only reversed after massive international protests, and even then only hesitantly in accordance with a rather imprecisely worded ceasefire agreement. Moscow covered up this military strike, led with disproportionate force, as an unavoidable intervention for the protection of an ethnic minority. In fact, however, it led to the expulsion of numerous Georgian citizens from South Ossetia. All of this was overshadowed by Moscow’s rapid recognition of the separatist regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in blatant violation of international law. This is commensurate to an annexation of these two parts of Georgia but also results in a lasting dismemberment of Georgia’s territory.



[Klaus Becher](#)

Russia’s overall behaviour has made it quite easy for the West to arrive at what is now a more united stance. The great-power style show of military superiority, believed to be a thing of the past, and the accompanying unrestrained verbal escalation against the Georgian leadership that is democratically legitimate after all have left even governments without any tolerance that usually seek the Kremlin’s closeness and protection.

Actually, Russia’s international prestige has been clearly diminished as a consequence of this war. At the same time, doubts about the country as a stable supplier of energy and location for safe investments have grown even more.

**Jackson Janes:** The events in Georgia were set in motion by conflicting agendas which acted as dry timber for a war. The President of Georgia went after what he thought was an opportunity to exhibit his strength and wound up showing only his weaknesses. Despite admonitions even from the Americans, the temptation to show off to his own countrymen as a strong leader wound up as a disaster. Russia was all

too ready to make use of this for its own purposes, and was well prepared for an invasion weeks if not months in advance. The first use of Russian power outside its borders since 1979 seemed to be an equally irresistible temptation to demonstrate its power and influence in its neighborhood. The game of geopolitical chess gave Russia a winning set of moves which were used not only to demonstrate power abroad but also pride at home. The roots of this conflict were at once a mix of domestic and foreign policy ambitions.

**Klaus Naumann:** What we saw was a carefully prepared and brutally executed attempt by Russia to intimidate all its neighbours and to deter them to join institutions such as NATO and the EU.

The aim is to restore a Russian sphere of interest as cordon sanitaire along Russia's Western and Southwestern borders which simultaneously produces a Russian control of energy flows to Europe.

As an additional aim Russia wanted to weaken US influence in Europe and to prevent that Europe will rally behind the incoming US administration. Russia thus wanted to restore the Cold War arrangement of US/RUSSIA dialogue in which all issues of interest were at the end of the day settled bilaterally.

**Aslam Khan Niazi:** Summarizing what happened is always possible, but some events are shrouded in mysteries that unfold over time. The recent conflict demonstrates serious grievances on both sides as well as blatant mutual neglect. Georgia felt obliged to exercise its sovereign power to quell the South Ossetian insurgency. In its perception, South Ossetians were manipulated by Russia to the detriment of Georgia and hence needed a corrective dose to remind them of the loyalties they owed to Georgia. This was a bold attempt along the lines of Georgia's quelling of the Adjarian Turk insurgency in 1994. If successful in South Ossetia, Georgia would have definitely turned towards Abkhazia to end its romance with Russia. In this whole game, Georgia failed to assess the weight of Russia's possible response, including the military option.

Facts mixed with fiction during the last decade and a half. Russia's willingness to vacate military bases in Georgia was perceived as Russian weakness in the face of an expanding NATO and Georgia's pro-US stance. Instead, through this enormous, voluntary good-will gesture, Russia had offered a last reconciliatory chance for mending fences. Georgia failed to reciprocate and to appreciate the massive encroachment it had engineered on Russia's imperial psyche, which persisted for about 1000 years since the days of the Kievan State. Russian wrath was known to the whole world. Only Georgia was determined to play ignorant. The conflict is therefore no surprise if the Russo-Georgian equation is interpreted through the prism of history and its psychosocial as well as geopolitical dimensions.

Seeing the cobweb of the Russo-Georgian issues, Dr. Makni concluded the discussion aptly in his book “The situation in Georgia would remain a testing ground for the political acumen of its leaders.”<sup>1</sup> Russia harbors old reservations about Georgian behavior that negates any logic. For instance, arch-Bolsheviks at the time of Russian revolution were from Georgia, but in a strange paradox, Georgia defied the Bolsheviks in 1918. Now Russia has to assure its neighbors and the world that an eruption of hostilities like in Georgia will remain an exception and not become the norm.



**John Nomikos:** In most respects the events in Caucasus were a litmus test of Russia's ability to effectively flex its muscles and regain a part of the influence that it lost in the previous 15 years. The president of Georgia clearly miscalculated the new balance of powers in his periphery, thus getting into a brief conflict with negative consequences for Tbilisi.

[Luigi Caligaris](#)

**Wolfgang Plasche:** Once again by use of military force, Russia has proven to be willing and able to secure its area of influence whenever it seems appropriate for it to do so. There has been an unbroken line from Berlin in 1953, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Afghanistan 1979 to Georgia in our days.

Obviously there is no difference in policy shaping between the late Soviet Union and the Russia of today. The operation against Georgia was the final step within the execution of a plan thoroughly devised over years and accompanied by numbers of ingenious provocations against the government of this country.

Finally the trap that was set up for the Georgian president proved to be successful as well. The usefulness of the apparent incapability of Western services, particularly the American ones, to foresee the development of the situation in order to establish a sober estimate should not be underestimated.

From a strategic point of view the Russian counterattack, even when estimated disproportionately, does not seem to be the point now. What else should Russia have done militarily? Wait and have the bottleneck of the Roki Tunnel in their rear possibly closed for reinforcements? The point currently is that Russia for the first time since more than twenty years has invaded a sovereign and independent state that has been of interest for the EU, NATO and the US. Due to the lack of effective countermeasures by the West, there is a full scale of opportunities at Russia's disposal and no one currently knows what it is up to and what to do against it.

**Peter Regli:** Russia is back. The Kremlin has ruthlessly exploited the present weakness of the US and taken advantage of a capital mistake by the hotheaded Georgian president in support of its own strategy in the field in a merciless, impressive manner. The EU and NATO are in disunity, as usual now. They shy back from specific measures because most of them are dependent on Russian energy and not anymore capable of major military operations. The consequences of the disarmament of NATO member countries in recent years become visible now. The US is paralyzed by its overextended engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan and the

current election campaign. It has little room of manoeuvre left. What President Bush and his Secretary of State can deploy are strong words. Except for sending a few Navy ships to the Black Sea, the US is unable to follow them up with deeds. Everyone stares at Russia like the little mouse at the snake. In his clearly defined doctrine, President Medvedev has made clear how things are going to develop. The West has thus been warned. The question is whether Europe and the rest of the world have understood this message. Georgia might only be the beginning of a broader Russian policy of expansionist/imperialist character. Countries such as Ukraine, the Baltic states and other former Soviet bloc countries are rightly worried about their independent future.

**Sir Sebastian Roberts:** Serious miscalculation by Georgia of worldwide reactions to assertion of control in SO - esp Russian robustness and speed, and western inaction; serious failures of western nations and alliances to predict let alone to react in joined up and convincing ways.



[Goetz Gliemeroth](#)

**Rainer Schuwirth:** There was a disastrous miscalculation on the side of the Georgian president (regardless whether any other nation knew about or backed his intent). There is now severe damage to the wider security framework as a result of Russia's brutal strike. People have been killed, hate has increased, there has been severe destruction plus there are now many refugees and enormous demands on reconstruction.

### **What are the main lessons learned?**

**Ehsan Ahrari:** Don't allow insignificant potential allies to create a situation that would lead to a major conflict.

1. Don't take Russia for granted.
2. Get away from the conventional thinking that Russia will only be depicted as a "good" actor as long as it toes the American line in issues of high politics to that country.
3. Start a dialogue with Russia about how to take into consideration its genuine security interests.

**Klaus Becher:** The West had two decades to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet empire with stable structures supportive of peaceful cooperation and positive social and economic development. In the South Caucasus as well as in Ukraine, Moldavia and parts of Central Asia it did not manage to achieve this goal to the full required extent. Now that Russia has reclaimed its role as a major power that partially cooperates with the US and with Europe but has strong feelings about the pursuit of its own interests without regard for the consequences, a new strategic recipe is required for these "left-over" regions and their frozen conflicts.



**Luigi Caligaris:** The enlargement frenzy that has inspired both the EU and NATO was based on a lot of wishful assumptions while not attempting to understand what would happen if a new balance of power would be imposed upon Russia. Westphalia would have given some hints about such attempts.

Moreover, an overdose of enlargement has contributed to producing a political stalemate in the EU that is a combination of political impotence and military weakness. As things now stand, EU reactions to the Georgian crisis could not be anything but pathetic, thus encouraging Russia to be firm and provocative. Deployment of a European interposition force in Georgia would be possible only if Russia would be so kind as to write the Rules of Engagement and Europe would stick to them.

Even in NATO, Europe has little to offer as it has abandoned its highly publicized NATO Response Force (after having renounced the EU's ERRC) and it is incapable of backing it up with a credible force in Afghanistan which on the military side depends mainly on the American military effort.

The West is being presented with a worldwide scenario where the strategic balance of power is being rewritten. More countries will be able to challenge it and Russia is only the anticipation of such efforts. It is quite unlikely that other Western military commitments will be possible without a considerable change of political and military strategy.



[Jackson Janes](#)

Enlargement has been adopted both by the EU and NATO without having assessed its possible shortcomings. To believe that a country such as Russia that has practiced enlargement for centuries would not react if such a tactic were applied against it is at a minimum naïve.

The West and Europe in particular have so far been persuaded that the use of force is outdated, while other countries, Russia among them, are willing and ready to accept the risks of military confrontation. Europe for certain is not willing and ready to accept these risks and its devotion to low risk operations “other than war” may lead to a situation where it cannot deal with war scenarios even on a low scale such as the one in Georgia.

The whole debate about soft and hard power that has engaged Western political experts is nonsense, especially if soft power is not an option but only a consequence of deliberate military weakness. Equally stupid is military muscle flexing when everyone is aware that few if any European countries are prepared and willing to back up their political interest with a credible commitment to use military power.

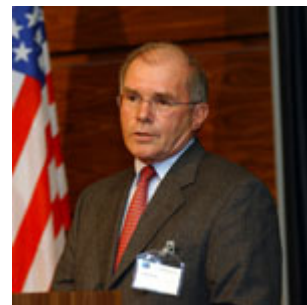
**Götz Gliemeroth:** What needs to be noted is the West's previous fundamental misperception of Russia's present policy of power. Not only was the increasing toughness and determination presented by Putin not taken sufficiently serious. Not

only were the growing differences in Russia's international behaviour (cf. Kosovo and Iran) obviously not evaluated with sufficient thoroughness. Much more significantly, looking almost exclusively at Russia's energy resources left the rest of Russia's foreign policy overshadowed and out of account to such a degree that Russia's recent massive military action apparently took the West completely by surprise.

What also needs to be stated is the entirely insufficient coordination in the Alliance with regard to Georgia and Ukraine potentially approaching the Alliance. On the one hand, the sustained support of Georgia by the United States through the presence of military advisers and substantial military equipment assistance for the Georgian armed forces seemed to be quite determined, given that this is a country which is no doubt of strategic importance due to its role for oil and gas transit and whose population is in addition predominantly Western-oriented, with a majority presumably desiring accession to NATO.

At the same time, in stark contrast to these US efforts, other Alliance partners sought to delay membership as long as possible, although it had already been promised in principle. Out of a hardly comprehensible respect for alleged vital Russian interests, the Bucharest summit even blocked participation of Ukraine and Georgia in the Membership Action Plan.

Looking at the "facts" thus created, even Alliance partners that regarded the strong US engagement in Georgia as premature should then have realised the increasingly urgent requirement for synchronization that emerged within the Alliance, visible to the whole world, due to their playing for time.



It was precisely this conceptual incoherence and weakness, this credibility gap of the Alliance that Moscow rapidly managed to exploit for its own interests.

[Klaus Naumann](#)

In retrospect, coordination between the US administration and the Georgian president looks equally unsatisfactory. Probably due to lack of straightforwardness, President Saakashvili was left in the erroneous belief that he would eventually receive Western military assistance. What else would have caused him to launch this rushed and mistaken military strike that made Georgia fall straight into the trap Russia had prepared for long?

While it was right to respond to Russia with determination after the fact (including unequivocal condemnation and suspension of cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council), it would have been necessary long before to make it absolutely clear to Georgia that such application of military force for solving internal conflicts would be entirely inappropriate and unacceptable, and would also be rather damaging, if not completely fatal, for membership aspirations.

**Jackson Janes:** The lessons are still being learned. The role of big power states continues to be decisive on the geopolitical stage. Russia, China, India, and the States are the main examples. Despite Europe's insistence that the days of the nation-state



are numbered in the 21st century, the fact is that the business of national politics remains a driving force in most geopolitical battles around the globe. That said, the ability to influence the choices being made by individual states is circumscribed by the capacity to exert leverage, a capacity that can be enhanced in joint concert with others. Yet even the EU with all its cohesion still is vulnerable when trying to come to grips with a common policy, as the response to the Russian invasion of Georgia has illustrated. In fact, there is a danger of another east-west rift within the EU when it comes to dealing with Russia in the future.

**Klaus Naumann:** There are quite few lessons to be learnt:

- a. International Law and the respect for a nation's sovereignty do not matter for Russia if they are seen as damaging the pursuit of Russia's national interest.
- b. Russia will use force preventively if there is no risk of a determined reaction.
- c. Russia is not interested in a major conflict with the US but it will do all it can to drive wedges between the US and its allies by keeping Europe as divided as possible.
- d. The so called West must not fail in telling Russia that there are two red lines Russia must never cross:
  - Any attack in which form ever on a NATO member will lead to invoking article 5.
  - The right of sovereign states to join any international organisation must be respected by Russia if Russia wants to remain a respected partner.
- e. The military performance was not really impressive and the Russians must be told that they are way off of being a serious opponent for NATO.

**Aslam Khan Niazi:**

- The dissolution of the Soviet Union was not only a bold, voluntary acceptance by Russia of the realities on the ground, letting the centrifugal forces of its fifteen states take their course. It was also a remarkably unique phenomenon never seen before on the planet. Georgia failed to recognize that it should not dump the former parent power in its neighborhood for good. Instead, while pursuing a sovereign course, it should have taken Russia along, as the five Central Asian Republics are shrewdly doing.
- It is dangerous to seek military solutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. US floundering in the mesh of conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia (Afghanistan) only prove the veracity of this statement. Therefore, it is imperative for Georgia to maintain its recourse through diplomacy, keeping existing amenable mechanisms such as the EU and OSCE at the forefront. Point out this lesson to Russia, too. It fits well to rein in their hot-headedness as well.
- Hostile neighbors are a pain in the neck. Security conditions remain strong only as long as relationships are kept pleasant. Emboldenment by distant actors does not deter a determined foe. Russia has proved it.
- No matter how good the justification, the logic also rightly applies to Russia that using the military option adds to the explosive character of an issue and does not solve it. The world, for the sake of 'peace', generally tends to line up behind a weaker power even if the weaker power commits a covert mischief.
- Russia, by virtue of its nuclear potential, is a world power. The Georgian conflict proves that when Russia exercises its military option, no matter how successful, it is enigmatically dangerous. Its strategic interests range from the Pacific to the Mediterranean and even beyond. Russia has signalled an articulate warning to potential foes. It has also scared some of its historic

- friends. Only the direction and the degree vary.
- When scholars keep warning that the “Eurasian Balkan” is surely becoming the playing ground for a “New Great Game” of regional as well as distant actors, fraught with dangerous consequences, there is a need to listen to them once and for all. Once the existence of flash points for violent conflict in Eurasia is admitted, one can proceed to the next stage: resolving these conflicts.
  - If the recognized conflict-resolution institutions fail to administer justice in the near future, the world’s confidence would erode. If they deliver, the hope for lasting peace would be sustained. Care must be taken by the powers to develop recipes for peace restoration through international bodies that enjoy acceptance by the conflict parties. Hollow slogans are likely to let us drift gradually and unwittingly towards the impotence of the League of Nations where the ‘big ones’ were not accountable and the weaker or lesser powers bore the brunt alone.

**John Nomikos:** The lessons learned could be summarized as for the need of reliable communication lines between Washington and Moscow, because it was clearly shown that the two countries could not understand each other’s motives and actions clearly enough in order to anticipate an unnecessary use of force. Moreover, it was also shown that the EU holds the key to stability in Eurasia due to its long-standing meditative role and the existence of strong interests on all sides. Lastly the concept of international law has received yet another heavy blow and the UN seems irrelevant to the resolution of this conflict.



[Aslam Khan Niazi](#)

**Wolfgang Plasche:** The main lesson seems to be the necessary realization that there is no particular difference in policymaking between the former Soviet Union and current Russia as far as the pursuit of its intentions within its area of interest is concerned. Indulging in wishful thinking about basic changes in the Russian political character has therefore pitifully proven wrong. Russia is still capable and willing to execute its political requirements, if necessary, by use of military force. It would take such action only after a careful estimate of the situation, particularly a risk evaluation of the countermeasures that adversaries are capable of and moreover willing to perform. In every respect, Russia with regards to the West is “sitting on the longer branch” as we German speakers use to say.

Russia can take political and therefore military decisions fast and precisely without any consideration for (credible) parliamentary control, constraints of party coalitions, public opinion and without the necessity of consulting allies, councils, assemblies and so on. It has a military with an eager leadership, capable to intervene rapidly everywhere within medium distances. Actually an economic dwarf, Russia has the means at its disposal, much more effective than any weapons, to politically blackmail the gas and oil dependent West.

As long as Europe is not willing to realize that the only way to deal with Russia is to speak with one voice, the European states will be played off against each other by

Russia unless they have a common foreign and security policy and act as one when dealing with Russia in its role as an energy provider.

As mentioned above, except for oil and gas, Russia is economically weak and needs European know-how and investment. However, without a united and common European performance towards Russia that isn't bogged down by too many national interests, learning the lesson won't work for good.

**Peter Regli:** All of us need clear, well-founded intelligence analysis again on the situation in Russia, possible developments and the intentions of the “infernally duo” Putin-Medvedev and the Kremlin power elite in their entourage. Appeasement would now definitely be the wrong course. Europe and the EU should also

- prepare a clear and realistic analysis of the situation,
- speak clear text to the public,
- cultivate dialogue with the Russians while keeping a strong backbone,
- as the French say, *c'est l'union qui fait la force!*

As for the latter, neither NATO nor the EU has earned any special laurels in the last years, with best regards from national interests! For the time being, Europe is left to its own devices. The US can only be expected to come back in spring 2009 after the new administration will have established itself to some degree.

The geopolitical situation in the world has been significantly transformed by the events of August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008. It is now again necessary to address the symmetrical security situation, or challenge, in Europe. At the same time, the asymmetrical threat remains unchanged.

**Sir Sebastian Roberts:**

- Georgia:
  - don't assume friends, even powerful ones, can and will intervene effectively in the face of invasion;
  - don't assume enemies, especially powerful ones, will not intervene in such circumstances;
  - don't assume that discussion about membership of a club (or even a timeframe for joining) means that existing members will support one effectively;
  - remember that armed intervention can usually only be countered effectively immediately with armed response; other counters are unlikely to be effective except over considerably longer timeframes;
  - Make a strategic plan re alliances with great care, and make it the core of foreign policy over a sensible (10 yr+) timeframe;
  - At the tactical level don't underestimate the significance of airpower.
- Russia:
  - You can act with near-impunity (impunity except in regard to reputation) in your own geographic area of influence, especially if you do not care if others regard you as non-kulturny (but rely on you for energy);

- "western" alliances are incapable of making deft foreign policy decisions;
- The same applies to many individual nations;
- But be aware that FDI depends on confidence as well as self-interest.

**Rainer Schuwirth:** There are now new “independent” states - but unable to survive without the Big Brother, a drastic increase of the perception that Russia is "back as a global power" - both within their government as well as within their population, a speedy development of a settlement by the French EU Presidency - however so speedy that a lot obviously remains unclear. There is also ongoing confusion as to whom is responsible for what (therefore there is the need for an international, neutral investigation).



[John Nomikos](#)

There are also lessons that can be identified but are not yet learned(!): The situation in Georgia is another case where crisis prevention failed, although everyone claims to have seen it coming. Preventive diplomacy only works if there are clear and unambiguous messages to all parties concerned - and if allies or partners (NATO/EU) speak as one. Aspiring members to NATO/the EU must be clearly informed about the expectations they have to fulfill (the 1994/95 NATO enlargement study is very clear, however regrettably forgotten by too many, even inside NATO. Based upon this study, it is difficult to imagine Georgia as a member). Nevertheless and again, Russia has taken the wrong Russian position towards NATO enlargement. i.e. the story of the increasing threat and encirclement - against better knowledge; and the "defeat" that the GIS countries and others did not recognize the two new independent states.

### **What should NATO do?**

**Ehsan Ahrari:** Certainly not invite GA and Ukraine for nato membership anytime soon. This issue needs a lot pondering and debating within NATO.

**Klaus Becher:** Russia’s future strategic orientation is still in the balance but is likely to tilt towards renewed hostility unless the existing, relatively strong overlaps in mutual security and economic interests are recognised more effectively. Above all, this includes averting the threat of a nuclear-armed extremist Iran and the maintenance of a multinational trade regime for raw materials and energy resources that permits all participating parties to achieve their objectives in a calculable manner. The bundle of accumulated issues in the West’s relationship with Russia needs to be analysed as a whole and translated into a package strategy of a similar magnitude and level of seriousness and commitment as the Harmel approach of the mid-1960s. Such a package is also likely to include ratification of the new status quo in Georgia and NATO membership for the remnants of Georgia. The package of strategic issues, however, reaches far beyond defence, regional security and arms control. It also includes other major themes such as energy security, climate protection and rules for trade and investment. NATO can obviously only form one element among several in

an architecture of negotiation and cooperation that will have to be developed over a period of 10-15 years. NATO's most important potential contribution is the reestablishment of a perception of Western unity, including on such divisive defence-related issues as missile defence, Afghanistan/Pakistan, Iraq, Chinese military power projection and the security of Israel. Recognisable and credible strategic unity of assessment and purpose within NATO would help to reduce the temptation for Moscow to rehash its old game of playing out "old Europe" against the US and its core allies to score easy, but destabilising points in its drive toward rebuilding Russia's national glory, power and wealth. In the short term, this also requires a strong, united and active stance of NATO in favour of the defence of Georgia against any further territorial challenge, including the necessary supply of defence material and training to the government of Georgia for this purpose.

**Luigi Caligaris:** As things now stand, NATO too has few cards to play. Russia is aware of NATO's European weaknesses and it is certainly ready to call the bluff whenever it feels like it. NATO has only the choice of either making diplomatic noise or using its high-tech strategy which, by the way, is mostly American. Not to mention the nuclear deterrence factor which is almost irrelevant in this scenario.

In conclusion, the events that have taken place could have been foreseen and it is incredible that some have encouraged Georgia to take action, possibly counting upon external military support. Russia had the choice of the place and the time. It is about time that Europe and NATO decide on a suitable division of labour between them. There is no clear understanding of what each should do while, inevitably, the far greater American military strength enormously influences the whole decision process.

**Götz Gliemeroth:** This follows from what was already said.

**Jackson Janes:** NATO can only respond to this current challenge as the organization it is. It is a military alliance which is embodied in article V. It must stand for that commitment within the framework of its current membership. NATO can also share its resources within the alliance in order to maintain balance and solidarity with the membership. It can remain open to new applicants, but they must fulfill the same requirements which all of those who have joined have done. The most important thing NATO can do now is to show unity in purpose.



[Wolfgang Plasche](#)

**Klaus Naumann:** NATO has to reconsider from scratch its Russia policy. There can be no return to business as usual since an attack on any state in Europe is a clear violation of the underlying principles of all treaties since the end of the cold war. At the same time NATO should make clear that NATO does not want a confrontation but seeks cooperation with Russia as soon as Russia will return to policies which are based on existing international law.

NATO should review its open door policy and reiterate that the door remains open to all states in Europe who want to join and who are prepared to enter the obligations of a NATO member.

NATO should review its decisions on GEO and UKR and reaffirm its preparedness to



accept them as members provided they refrain from any use of force in pursuance of their national interests. Under this condition the timetable for the MAP should be reviewed without setting firm dates for membership.

NATO should consider the development of contingency plans for the defence of any of its members against any attack in which form ever and it should offer Russia to inform Russia on such plans once they are completed.

**Aslam Khan Niazi:** NATO's prospects as an alliance for playing any concrete role in the Caucasus are waning fast because the major power involved, Russia, does not trust it. Russia is suspicious of NATO being used as a stick against itself, likely to be branded as the party at fault not by European consent but by U.S. domination. In addition, Russia sees NATO not only as a remnant of the Cold War era but also, in some Russian strategists' views, as an instrument of a "continued" Cold War consolidated by the erstwhile imperialists. In the entire criticism aimed at NATO, Russian tirades generally skirt around Europe and hit at the transatlantic power. The Western logic that the offer of NATO partnership to Russia would take the gripe out of the issue remains confused. WW II is barely 60-65 years past. Some Russian war veterans still survive to pass on the horrific tales of the misery Russia faced through deception of alliances. Failure to perceive the deception struck with 'Operation Barbarossa' on 22 June 1941, when Russian trains carrying fuel and grain were still heading towards Germany. Hitler had been meticulously granting carrots to Russia in the pre-Barbarossa phase while devouring the larger chunk of the occupation 'bonanza', notably the Romanian oil fields of Ploesti. The shock was so severe that Joseph Stalin took several days to recover from a nervous breakdown. Russia's irritability can perhaps be interpreted through such historic experiences.

**John Nomikos:** NATO should rethink its multiple commitments. Having a front in Afghanistan makes NATO dependent on the Russian communication lines in Central Asia whilst the naval wing of the Alliance has substantial obligations in the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus it is probable that a military commitment in Georgia is not feasible for the short term. The use of public diplomacy and soft power is an alternative method of operations that should be looked upon. Lastly, the creation of an independent forum of experts and stakeholders concerning NATO-Russian relations could also facilitate the dialog between them so as to foresee any potential hot spots and upturns.

**Wolfgang Plasche:** NATO should remind itself of the core purpose of the alliance. NATO has been a system of collective defense which means the defense of its members.

The system should not be (ab)used from time to time as a means of policy by member states. No one can know exactly whether or not the introduction of a MAP to Georgia would have prevented the Russian invasion of Georgia and if it had not, the disgrace for NATO would have been embarrassing even if Article 5 would not have been applicable at that stage. NATO should refrain from taking into consideration the membership of states with unsettled political environments. Otherwise the alliance will take high risks (why die for Danzig?) or her credibility will suffer dramatically.

An idea of reshaping the Washington Treaty will be dealt with in the next paragraph.

**Peter Regli:** NATO should think again soberly about the risks of its enlargement, which happened too quickly. It should realistically assess the threat not only to countries like Ukraine and the Baltic states but also to countries such as Finland, Poland and the Czech Republic. It should consider military presence in these countries and send clear, unmistakable signals to Moscow. Moscow's own assessment of the situation and the psychological aspects of "encirclement" must be understood by the West and given their proper weight. This must be taken into account in assessing the situation. Nothing but clear and unambiguous unity will make an impression on Moscow. National manoeuvring weakens the position of the West.



[Peter Regli](#)

**Sir Sebastian Roberts:**

- Be clear and explicit about membership criteria and timeframes;
- Don't cage wild bears;
- If dealing with bears, learn how bears see themselves and their neighbours, and how they like to be treated;
- Treat them as they like to be treated, but in addition show them the benefits and rewards of being treated in more developed ways (not just the penalties and disrespect of not conforming), and do so;
- Be clear and robust about the consequences of transgressing the norms of developed international behaviour;
- Speak and act with one voice.
- Monitor and predict well!

**Rainer Schuwirth:** NATO and the EU must be clear and demand an independent investigation. Both organizations need to assess the results and then act; everything that has happened so far is improvised and not convincing.

**What should the EU do?**

**Ehsan Ahrari:** For once it should develop its own strategy of dealing with Russia, not as a potential "bad actor," but a great power, which also wishes to reemerge as a superpower.

**Klaus Becher:** For the EU, as well as to a lesser degree for the US, the failure to keep the peace in Georgia is a worrying sign of rhetorical and conceptual overstretch. The EU and most of its members overestimate their power. They raise more hopes that they can fulfil. They have damaged their power base by undermining the notion of the US as an allied European power, by talking down to Russia and other neighbours and by neglecting defence and security beyond cheap feel-good symbolism. The EU is not currently a relevant player in the South Caucasus and there is very little prospect of improvement. The EU must not introduce an additional factor of instability in Georgia in the form of improperly mandated and maintained EU troops which would invariably be withdrawn whenever fighting erupts. The EU does however have a

major role to play in assisting with reconstruction and the integration of refugees, and in the longer term accommodating reconciliation between Georgia and its lost territories with a view to realigning the legal with the factual status of sovereignty, based on mutual agreement and respect.

**Luigi Caligaris:** As things now stand, Europeans want to have their own military organization without having what is politically and militarily needed. As a result, they make themselves weak both in NATO and the EU. A serious European pillar in NATO with much greater military and political interoperability between European forces could benefit both the US and Europe.

Instead of trying to ask oneself what NATO and the EU should do, it would make much more sense to encourage American and European decision makers to become familiar with political-military strategy as well as with Eurasian history. The next step would be to profit from such knowledge to come up with reasonable decisions. If one compares the amount of culture devoted to similar issues in the Cold War with that shown nowadays, it is easy to understand why the West is at present embarrassed by such an avoidable crisis.

**Götz Gliemeroth:** Experience shows that the EU's ability to arrive at necessary fundamental decisions depends to a very high degree on the internal "state" it is in. With a view to the still persisting fault line over participation in Iraq operations and other issues, the fact that a resolution was unanimously passed to condemn Russia is therefore good news in any case. Otherwise, the EU would have immediately vanished in the realm of political irrelevance.



[Sir Sebastian Roberts](#)

Moreover, the resolution employs language of unambiguous condemnation, including speaking of a breach of international law and calling the military strike disproportional. Even if one might be tempted to suspect that the EU's shying back from the threshold to sanctions represents the "least common denominator", to my mind this was not the wrong decision in the given situation. In particular, a catalogue of potential sanctions would have required much more detailed and, above all, reliable coordination long in advance – if sanctions are supposed to have an effect on their target and not consume themselves in platitudes. Anyway there is also an encompassing need for clarification for common action, as far as possible, in the case of further aggravation of the situation. Otherwise, the unambiguous words chosen so far would turn out to be nothing but roaring words without consequence after all. What must be added is increased deployment of observers under the common framework of the OSCE as well as cases brought to the International Court over support of ethnic cleansing by South Ossetian militias.

In addition to increased efforts to achieve the necessary "monopolisation" of European foreign policy, Europeans should now also move forward to better harmonize their national energy policies, not least to check excessive dependence on Russia (separating network and operation, expanding the trans-European gas network infrastructure, reconsider the "Baltic pipeline" project, etc.)

With respect to appropriate sanctions, however, one should not tolerate to be guided too much by the interests of one's own business lobby. One should rather not fail to realise Russia's vital interest in avoiding friction in its cooperation with Europe as much as possible. After all, for Russia this is not only about selling its energy but also about the more and more pressing need to repair its whole own decayed system and infrastructure. Against this background, the first-time threat by the EU of suspending the EU-Russia Agreement will not go entirely unnoticed.

Finally one should not forget that the EU's population is three and a half times as big as Russia's. Our economy is 15 times bigger, and even our military expenditures are ten times bigger than Russia's. In spite of the gas and oil wealth, prospective investments in Russia are insufficient for satisfying domestic and foreign demand in Russia. In this context, the potential expulsion of Russia from the G-8 grouping would always be a sharp sword. Independent of that, the "Eastern partnership" for stronger inclusion of Georgia, Ukraine and other countries could not only strengthen their respective democratic and economic development but also serve to prevent possible further expansive ambitions of Russia.

**Jackson Janes:** The EU can do other things. The EU is not a military alliance, but stands for a vision of Europe. It can share its resources with all those who are members but also encourage those around it to aspire to the same set of standards and values. In that sense the EU can bear witness to the future of Europe by speaking out against those who seek to subvert that vision, especially with military force. While the EU cannot react to such force in an effective way, it can emphasize what those who choose to use force and threats will forfeit the connections with the European opportunities in which 27 nations now take part. It must prove that it can say no to those threatening Europe as effectively as it has said yes to those who aspire to join it.

**Klaus Naumann:** The EU should develop a set of generic actions to limit trade exchange of goods, information and visitors with states who violate the sovereignty of EU member states or applicants for membership. It should also reduce its dependency on Russian gas and oil by seeking alternative sources.

The EU could establish an export control regime for states which act in violation of the Helsinki Agreement or the UN charter. By the same token the EU could develop a system of preferential treatment for applicant countries which are threatened by a third party by the use of force.

The EU should develop a generic set of sanctions to be applied against states which act in a way which threatens peace, stability and the sovereignty of existing European states.

**Aslam Khan Niazi:** Russia sees NATO's presence in the Caucasus as well as in Eastern Europe with historic grudge. This precludes a role of NATO in the restoration of peace. As a war machine, nobody can possibly ignore NATO. It is comprised of powers that went through the agony of WW II to emerge valiantly as victor or vanquished. That is the essential result. In contrast, Russia's desire to work with European powers on the EU level or individually holds promise. Thus, it would be wise for NATO to maintain a low profile in the region. Let the problems of Europe and the adjoining territories be tackled by the Europeans that have historically large

social, economic and military stakes among themselves. The encouraging aspect of the European powers is that they appear set to conduct inter-state affairs in a transparent manner, respecting the entire range of all norms of international relations. This is what the parties of the dispute are looking for, not for ruses played on them by certain agencies or powers that drive a wedge for their own myopic interests.

**John Nomikos:** The EU has managed another crisis, this time rather successfully, but it needs to construct a holistic approach to the issue, meaning to view political, military and economic/energy affairs under a unified prism of analysis. By having multiple suppliers and a plethora of commitments it could overcome its relative dependence on Moscow and at the same time be able to continue its role as a medium of credibility and communication between the Atlantic and the Urals. Problems still remain judging by the fact that the EU has already 27 members from all sides of the European continent making it an extended and rather bureaucratic organization.

**Wolfgang Plasche:** The EU finally should recognize that its indigenous tasks can't be performed by others for good. In contrast to Russia, Europe is an economic giant but due to national peculiarities and jealousies politically a dwarf as such.

The union has either the choice to become a global player (however to attain such a position, a truly common foreign policy would be an indispensable prerequisite) or to continue to drag itself along without any chance of seriously influencing global or even European issues.



[Rainer Schuwirth](#)

The so-called European defense policy is in poor condition as well; it represents waste of resources, lacks effectiveness and partially duplicates existing NATO structures unnecessarily. The EU will someday have to realize that a European NATO means a European defense.

An alteration of the Washington treaty for the purpose of creating two strong groups tied together across the Atlantic Ocean however with certain independencies could turn out to be useful for both of the groups.

**Peter Regli:** Similar considerations apply as to NATO. The EU is now paying the price for its hasty enlargement. It must reflect on the limits of the ransom it is prepared to pay under the Kremlin's energy blackmail, what escape scenarios exist, and if allies can be found in the Caucasus and in Central Asia, including new ones that can potentially also supply energy. This also requires dialogue with Moscow for the time being. Such dialogue, however, must be clear, unambiguous, courageous, clearly coordinated and forward-looking. We ought to know by now that Moscow does not honor agreements unless they serve its own national interests. They are not alone in the world in this respect!

Tiger tamer Putin and President Medvedev, through the national strategic doctrine he pronounced, have sent clear signals. Foreign Minister Lavrov does not always control his feelings very diplomatically and displays the hurt and insulted Russian soul to us.



These are indicators that have to be diligently taken into account in assessing the developments.

What is at stake is a new security situation and the future orientation of the common European house. What we need now are global thinkers, not small-minded nationalist shopkeepers! The latter is what you still find in Paris, Berlin, Rome and also London. Unfortunately!

**Rainer Schuwirth:** NATO and the EU must be clear and demand an independent investigation. Both organizations need to assess the results and then act; everything that has happened so far is improvised and not convincing.

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